

BACKGROUNDER

The Math Curriculum

Saskatchewan's math curriculum is in line with the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol. The curriculum in Saskatchewan is essentially the same as British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories, the Yukon and high performing jurisdictions such as Alberta and Ontario.

The math curriculum was recently rolled out in Saskatchewan, with provinces like Ontario and Alberta preceding our province's roll out by three to five years. In Saskatchewan, Grades 1, 4 and 7 were introduced in 2007. Grades 2, 5 and 8 were introduced in 2008. Grades 3, 6 and 9 were introduced in 2009. Grade 10 came out in 2010 and Grade 11 in 2011.

The Consultation Process

Government MLAs Russ Marchuk and Gene Makowsky, were asked to lead a consultation process on Saskatchewan's existing math curriculum, both have previous education experience.

Eight consultation meetings took place with teachers and frontline administrators across the province. More than 140 teachers and administrators participated. Feedback was generally positive regarding the curriculum but with caveats that additional instructional supports may be required for teachers and parents. As well, there was feedback that there is a need for province-wide coordination of best-practices for interpreting and implementing new curriculum.

The majority of educators made a call for patience. Since the first students to participate in the new math curriculum are only in Grade 11, educators believe the criticism is misplaced. As evidence, they cite the fact that the curriculum in Saskatchewan is essentially the same as Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

Parents were also asked to provide feedback to Government via email. Nearly 550 responses were received through the Ministry of Education website. The majority of the feedback indicated parents were experiencing difficulties in supporting their children with learning math as approaches to instruction differed from approaches commonly used in the classroom prior to the introduction of the new curriculum. A number of parents requested better communication between home and school and supports so they could better help their children with math at home.

What's Being Done

Government will be strengthening and expanding professional development opportunities for math, using existing best practices from school divisions to improve curriculum roll out and connecting with families through School Community Councils to ensure the necessary supports are in place to provide math assistance at home.

An example of using best practices includes options for the roll out of the 30 level curriculum next year. Some school divisions held parent nights to help introduce new curriculum to students and their families and this was very helpful. Next year, all school divisions will be encouraged to hold events like this to introduce the 30 level curriculum to families.

Changes have already been made to the structure within the Ministry of Education to better align with goals for improved student achievement across Saskatchewan. This has included significant changes to the Student Achievement and Supports branch to strike a better balance between curriculum development, instruction and assessment. There are now individual units that will each be responsible for heading up and co-ordinating curriculum, instruction and assessment. The new balance will mean that there will be more focused and strategic support for teachers and for school divisions.